

# SONG SPOTLIGHT

## *His Mercy Is More*

By Matt Papa & Matt Boswell

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**SONG**  
**SPOTLIGHT**

# Why Song Spotlight?

## Dear FBC Families,

One of the beautiful gifts God has given His church is music. Songs help us remember truth. They stay with us when sermons fade. They echo in our hearts during hard days and joyful moments. Many of us can still sing songs we learned as children—long before we understood all their meaning.

That's why at FBC during the year we have a Song Spotlight.

Over the next several weeks, our church family will focus on one worship song together. We'll sing it often in our services, talk about it in groups and ministries, and provide resources to help you explore the song at home. You'll find the lyrics, the story behind the song, Scripture passages connected to it, devotional thoughts, and prayer ideas.

Our hope is simple: that this song becomes part of your family's spiritual language.

We want children, parents, grandparents—everyone—to learn these songs deeply. Not just to sing along, but to understand what they teach us about God.

## Why Songs Matter

God's Word tells us: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you... singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16) When we sing together, God's truth settles into our hearts. Songs help us memorize Scripture. They teach us who God is. They remind us of His promises. And they become tools the Holy Spirit uses throughout our lives.

Some of these songs may be sung at bedtime. Some may be heard in the car on the way to school. Some may comfort us in seasons of grief. Others will remind us to trust God when the future feels uncertain.

We choose these songs carefully. Each one is:

- Biblically faithful
- Easy for the whole church to sing
- Meaningful for all ages
- Built to last—not just for today, but for years to come
- Able to help prepare us both for living faithfully and for dying well

Our prayer is that these songs will become part of your family story.

## How Your Family Can Participate

Here are a few simple ways to join in:

**Sing together.** Play the song at home or in the car and sing along—even if it feels awkward at first.

**Talk about the lyrics.** Ask your kids:

- What do you hear about God in this song?
- Is there a line you like?
- What does this song teach us?

**Read Scripture together.** Use the passages provided in the Song Spotlight resource to connect the lyrics to God's Word.

**Pray together.** Thank God for who He is. Ask Him to help your family trust Him more.

**Memorize a line.** Pick one meaningful lyric and practice it during the week.

## Passing Faith to the Next Generation

One of our greatest hopes is that these songs help pass faith from one generation to the next. Children often learn theology before they can explain it—through music. When families sing together, they are planting seeds of truth that God can grow over a lifetime.

May these songs strengthen your faith.

May they shape your prayers.

May they point your children to Jesus.

And may they remind us all that we belong to Him.

We're grateful to walk this journey with you.

In Christ,

The FBC Worship Team



# *His Mercy Is More*

by Matt Papa & Matt Boswell

## **Verse 1:**

What love could remember no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

## **Chorus:**

Praise the Lord His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness new every morn  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

## **Verse 2:**

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father so tender is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest the vilest the poor  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

## **Verse 3:**

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

# Lyric & Scripture Mapping

## **Verse 1: Scripture References:**

What love could remember no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

*Hebrews 8:12; Isaiah 43:25*  
*Psalms 103:10-12*  
*Micah 7:18-19*  
*Romans 5:20*

## **Chorus: Scripture References:**

Praise the Lord  
His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness new every morn  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

*Psalms 103:1-2*  
*Psalms 136:1*  
*Lamentations 3:22-23*  
*James 2:13; Romans 8:1*

## **Verse 2: Scripture References:**

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father so tender is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest the vilest the poor  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

*2 Peter 3:9*  
*Luke 15:20*  
*Luke 5:31-32; Matthew 11:28*  
*Ephesians 2:4-5*

## **Verse 3: Scripture References:**

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

*Ephesians 1:7-8*  
*1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 9:12*  
*Colossians 2:13-14*  
*Titus 3:5-7*

# His Mercy Is More

Key of E • page 1 of 2

HYMNAL SCORE

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble and bass clef in the key of E major (three sharps) and 6/8 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords E, A, and E are indicated above the staff.

1. What love could re - mem - ber no wrongs we have done?  
2. What pa - tience would wait as we con - stant - ly roam?  
3. What rich - es of kind - ness he lav - ished on us.

Musical notation for the second system, continuing the melody and bass line. Chords B/D#, C#m, A, and B are indicated above the staff.

Om - ni - scient, all - know - ing, he counts not their sum.  
What Fa - ther so ten - der is call - ing us home?  
His blood was the pay - ment, his life was the cost.

Musical notation for the third system, including a change in time signature from 6/8 to 3/8 and back to 6/8. Chords E, F#m7, E/G#, and A are indicated above the staff.

Thrown in to a sea with - out bot - tom or shore.  
He wel - comes the weak - est, the vil - est, the poor.  
We stood 'neath a debt we could nev - er af - ford.

Musical notation for the fourth system, including a change in time signature from 6/8 to 3/8 and back to 6/8. Chords A, E/B, B, E, A, and E are indicated above the staff.

Our sins, they are man - y, his mer - cy is more. Praise the Lord,

C#m7 B A E Bsus B A E

his mer-cy is more. Strong-er than dark-ness,

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of music. The treble staff begins with a C#m7 chord, followed by a B chord. The melody features a half note G#4, a quarter note A4, a dotted quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The bass staff provides accompaniment with chords G#2-B2-E3, G#2-B2-E3, and G#2-B2-E3. The lyrics 'his mer-cy is more.' are aligned under the first four notes, and 'Strong-er than dark-ness,' are aligned under the next four notes.

B C#m A E/B B E

new ev-'ry morn; our sins, they are man - y, his mer-cy is more.

Detailed description: This system contains the second two staves of music. The treble staff starts with a B chord, followed by a C#m chord, an A chord, an E/B chord, a B chord, and an E chord. The melody includes a quarter note G#4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G#4, and a quarter note E4. The bass staff provides accompaniment with chords G#2-B2-E3, G#2-B2-E3, G#2-B2-E3, G#2-B2-E3, G#2-B2-E3, and G#2-B2-E3. The lyrics 'new ev-'ry morn; our sins, they are man - y, his mer-cy is more.' are aligned under the notes. The system concludes with a double bar line.

# His Mercy Is More

By Matt Boswell | Matt Papa

Intro - |A // E // |B // // // |A // E // |B // // // |

What love could remember no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore  
Our sins they are many His mer - cy is more

Praise the Lord His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness new every morn  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father so tender is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor  
Our sins they are many His mer - cy is more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins they are many His mer - cy is more

## *The Story behind "His Mercy Is More"*

The hymn *His Mercy Is More*, written by Matt Papa and Matt Boswell, reminds us of one of the most beautiful truths of the Christian faith: God's mercy never runs out. Though the writers live far apart, they have worked together faithfully to serve the church by writing music filled with biblical depth and heartfelt worship. Their desire has always been to place rich, life-giving truth on the lips of God's people.

Many songs celebrate God's love and grace, but mercy can be harder for us to grasp. Mercy means that God does not give us the punishment we deserve. Instead of judgment, He offers forgiveness. Instead of rejection, He gives restoration. When we fall short—and we all do—His mercy meets us right where we are.

The inspiration for this hymn came from a simple phrase found in the writings of John Newton: "His mercy is more." Newton, once a slave trader who became a devoted pastor, understood deeply the transforming power of God's forgiveness. His letters overflowed with compassion and hope, pointing people again and again to Christ's unfailing love. From those words grew a song that now strengthens believers around the world.

This hymn reminds us that our sins, failures, and weaknesses are never greater than God's mercy. When guilt weighs heavily on our hearts, when discouragement threatens our faith, or when we feel unworthy to approach God, we are invited to remember: His mercy is more... more than our past, more than our regrets, more than our fears.

God's mercy gives us courage to begin again. It assures us that we are not defined by our mistakes, but by His grace. Each new day is an invitation to walk in gratitude, humility, and renewed faith.

No matter where you are in your journey of faith, remember this truth: God's mercy is greater than every failure and stronger than every doubt. Today, walk confidently in the grace that never runs dry—His mercy is more.

*Gracious Father,  
Thank You for Your endless mercy. When I fall short, You meet me with forgiveness. When I am weak, You give me strength. Help me to rest in Your compassion and to live each day in grateful obedience. May my life reflect the mercy You have shown me through Christ.  
Amen.*

# John Newton: A Monument of God's Mercy

“Just when all who know them are expecting to hear that God has brought down divine vengeance upon them, the Lord (whose thoughts are high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) is pleased to pluck them like brands out of the fire. He makes them monuments of His mercy for the encouragement of others.”

— John Newton, *Out of the Depths*

Only someone who has been rescued from destruction can fully understand the punishment they deserve and the mercy they receive. Only someone who knows how close they came to ruin can appreciate what it means that God withheld judgment and showed compassion.

John Newton's life is a powerful testimony to this truth. His story is filled with reckless sin, selfish choices, and repeated failures. Again and again, he placed himself in danger—physically, morally, and spiritually. And again and again, God did not give him what he deserved.

Instead of destruction, he received mercy. When we study his life, we see that Newton truly stands as a monument to God's mercy, reminding us that although our sins are many, God's compassion is greater.

## Early Life and Lost Foundations

John Newton was born in London in 1725, the only child of a ship's captain and his sickly wife. His father was often at sea, leaving John largely in the care of his deeply religious mother. She devoted herself to his spiritual training. By age three he could read. By four he was memorizing Scripture. She taught him hymns, catechisms, and Bible passages, hoping he would become a pastor. But she died before he turned seven.

With her death, much of John's spiritual guidance disappeared. His father remarried, moved to the countryside, and John's education suffered. At boarding school, he drifted between brief religious seriousness and careless living. Even in these early years, God was merciful. Though Newton was already rebellious, God preserved him and did not abandon him.

## A Pattern of Selfishness and Sin

At eleven, Newton went to sea. He entered a harsh, immoral world and quickly adopted its values. He became disobedient, irresponsible, and self-centered. When his father arranged a job for him in Jamaica, Newton simply failed to go. He chose comfort over responsibility and ignored the consequences. Such behavior became normal for him.

Later, after conflict with a ship's captain, Newton joined a slave trader—an act that reflected both his moral blindness and his selfish ambition. This choice led to his humiliation. The trader abandoned him on an island, where he was chained, starved, and forced into hard labor. He, who would later profit from slavery, tasted its cruelty himself. He deserved little sympathy. Yet even here, God did not leave him to perish.

## **Near Death, Again and Again**

Throughout his early life, Newton repeatedly escaped situations that should have killed him.

- He missed a boat trip that ended in death for his friends.
- He avoided an assignment that resulted in others being killed.
- He survived violent storms that nearly destroyed his ships.
- He was spared from disease, accidents, and violence.

Each escape was undeserved. These were not rewards for good behavior. They were acts of mercy—God withholding judgment and preserving a reckless man who deserved ruin. Each time, Newton felt momentary conviction. He remembered his mother's teaching. He sensed that God had spared him. Yet he quickly returned to sin. Still, God remained patient.

## **Mercy in Discipline and Authority**

Newton also experienced mercy through human authorities. He committed offenses that should have resulted in flogging, imprisonment, or death. He disobeyed orders. He arrived late. He abandoned posts. He acted irresponsibly. Yet he was often forgiven.

Captains and officials overlooked his failures. Jobs were re-offered. Punishments were reduced. Consequences were delayed. Again and again, Newton received kindness where he deserved severity. Behind this human mercy, stood God's greater mercy.

## **A Cry for Mercy at Sea**

While traveling as a passenger on one voyage, Newton picked up a religious book out of boredom. Soon afterward, a devastating storm struck. Men were swept overboard. The ship nearly sank. Supplies were ruined. Death seemed certain. In terror, Newton cried out to God. For the first time in many years, he seriously considered that he deserved judgment—and that only God's mercy could spare him. The ship survived. Newton survived. God had once again withheld destruction.

## **Slow Change and Continued Mercy**

After this experience, Newton began to take faith more seriously. Yet his heart was still divided. He continued in the slave trade, even while reading Scripture and praying. He later admitted that he feared hell but still loved sin.

God could have removed him. God could have ended his life. God could have exposed his hypocrisy. Instead, God continued to spare him. He was given time to grow, time to repent, and time to change.

## **Mercy Through Weakness and Illness**

Before his fourth slave voyage, Newton suffered a severe stroke. He was forced to stay behind as the ship sailed. Many aboard were later killed in a revolt. Once again, illness—normally seen as misfortune—became an instrument of mercy. God used weakness to keep Newton from danger and wrongdoing. Doctors declared that he could no longer sail. His seafaring life ended. But his life itself was preserved.

## **A Life Redirected by Mercy**

Newton took a clerical job inspecting ships. He devoted himself to study, prayer, and spiritual growth. Over time, he sensed a call to ministry. Though he lacked formal education, God opened doors. He was ordained and became pastor in Olney, Buckinghamshire, England. He became a faithful shepherd, caring deeply for his people. He supported William Cowper, who became one of England's most famous poets, through severe depression. Together they created for the glory of God, writing hymns and poems that were influential in the churches where Newton served. Newton himself, wrote five verses of the beloved hymn *Amazing Grace*. As Newton reflected on his past, especially his role in slavery, he felt deep sorrow and repentance. He spoke openly about his guilt and urged others to oppose the evil he once supported.

## **Mercy That Redeemed His Influence**

God's mercy did not stop with sparing Newton's life. God also redeemed his influence. Newton encouraged William Cowper to use his gift of writing to expose injustice. Newton himself wrote a pamphlet condemning the slave trade and testified in front of the most influential political leaders in England about the horrors of the trade. Under Newton's guidance and support, Cowper wrote *The Negro's Complaint*, a powerful poem that gave voice to the suffering of enslaved people and revealed the cruelty of slavery. The poem became widely known and influential. It helped shape public opinion and was later quoted by leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.

This is one of the most remarkable evidences of God's mercy in Newton's life:

A former slave trader helped inspire literature that weakened slavery. A man who once profited from human suffering helped awaken consciences against it. A participant in injustice became an opponent of it. God did not erase Newton's past—but He allowed him to work against it.

Newton also encouraged and supported William Wilberforce in his campaign against the slave trade. Through these combined efforts, slavery was eventually abolished in England.

He was married to his wife Mary for 38 years and was buried beside her. His epitaph reads: *"Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long laboured to destroy."*

## **Conclusion: Living Proof of God's Mercy**

John Newton's life teaches us that God is patient with the undeserving. Mercy is not God pretending sin does not matter. Mercy is God choosing not to give sinners what they deserve. Newton deserved judgment. He received compassion. He deserved destruction. He received preservation. He deserved rejection. He received forgiveness. He deserved to be remembered only for shame.

Instead, God allowed him to be remembered for repentance and obedience. The man who once helped sustain slavery later helped weaken it. The man who once lived for himself later lived for others. The man who once ignored God later preached His truth. His life assures us that no failure is final when God shows mercy. We may deserve far worse. But God is rich in mercy.

# John Newton's Letter

(To an anonymous recipient)

March 18, 1767.

I CAN truly say, that I bear you upon my heart and in my prayers. I have rejoiced to see the beginning of a good and gracious work in you; and I have confidence in the Lord Jesus, that he will carry it on and complete it, and that you will be amongst the number of those who shall sing redeeming love to eternity.

Therefore, fear none of the things appointed for you to suffer by the way; but gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end. Be not impatient, but wait humbly upon the Lord. You have one hard lesson to learn, that is, the evil of your own heart: you know something of it, but it is needful that you should know more; for the more we know of ourselves, the more we shall prize and love Jesus and his salvation. I hope what you find in yourself by daily experience will humble you, but not discourage you; humble you it should, and I believe it does.

Are not you amazed sometimes that you should have so much as a hope, that, poor and needy as you are, the Lord thinketh of you? But let not all you feel discourage you; for our Physician is almighty, our disease cannot be desperate; and if he cast none out that come to him, why should you fear? **Our sins are many, but his mercies are more: our sins are great, but his righteousness is greater: we are weak, but he is power.**

Most of our complaints are owing to unbelief, and the remainder of a legal spirit; and these evils are not removed in a day. Wait on the Lord, and he will enable you to see more and more of the power and grace of our High-Priest. The more you know him, the better you will trust him: the more you trust him, the better you will love him; the more you love him, the better you will serve him.

This is God's way: you are not called to buy, but to beg; not to be strong in yourself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is teaching you these things, and I trust he will teach you to the end. Remember the growth of a believer is not like a mushroom, but like an oak, which increases slowly indeed, but surely. Many suns, showers, and frosts, pass upon it before it comes to perfection; and in winter, when it seems dead, it is gathering strength at the root. Be humble, watchful, and diligent in the means, and endeavor to look through all, and fix your eye upon Jesus, and all shall be well. I commend you to the care of the good Shepherd, and remain, for his sake.

Newton, J. (n.d.). *The Works of The Rev. John Newton*. [www.tracts.ukgo.com/newton\\_7letters\\_to\\_unknown.pdf](http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/newton_7letters_to_unknown.pdf)

## Who Is Matt Papa?



A veteran songwriter and musician, Matt Papa has carved an even more unique space for himself as one of the world's top modern-day hymn writers. With songs like, *His Mercy Is More*, *Christ Our Hope In Life And Death* and *Come Behold The Wondrous Mystery*, Matt tours regularly across the U.S. as a songwriter with Getty Music and frequently guests on their tours. A three-time Dove Award nominated artist, Matt is on a mission to write songs that are singable, beautiful and timeless.

He currently serves as an artist-in-residence at Marco Presbyterian Church in Marco Island, FL, and most of all, is a husband, and a father to 5 beautiful children.

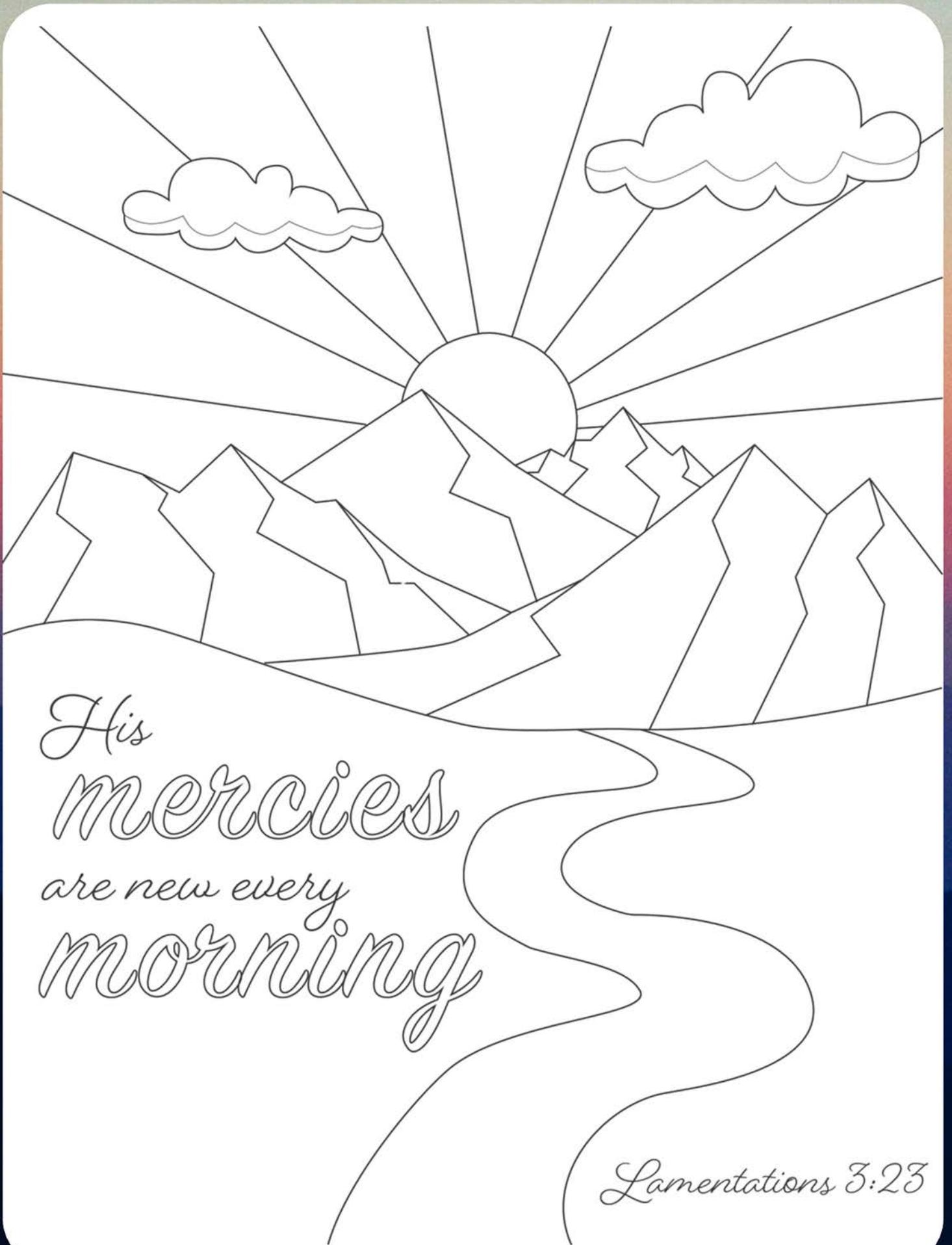
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## Who Is Matt Boswell?

Matt Boswell is an American pastor, hymn writer, and worship theologian whose work has significantly shaped the recovery of theologically rich congregational hymnody in contemporary evangelical worship. For more than thirty years he has been devoted to crafting gospel-centered songs that unite biblical depth with musical accessibility. Raised in a gospel-centered home, Boswell came to faith at a young age. During his teenage years, he began writing songs, quickly discovering that hymn writing was not only a creative passion but also a means of spiritual growth and ministry. That calling has continued throughout his life, shaping both his pastoral work and academic teaching. He holds a master's degree in Christian ministry (2013), a Th.M. in biblical spirituality (2020), and a Ph.D. in Christian worship (2020). His

academic and pastoral work consistently reflect his lifelong conviction that the Church's songs shape the Church's faith. Boswell serves as the founding and lead pastor of The Trails Church in North Texas, a congregation planted in 2018 that has become a joyful and enduring part of his ministry. Alongside his pastoral role, he serves as Professor of Worship Ministries at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he teaches on corporate worship, hymnology, and liturgical history, helping train the next generation of worship leaders and pastors. He is also the founder of Doxology & Theology, a ministry dedicated to encouraging churches to sing biblically faithful, gospel-rich songs. Matt lives in Texas with his wife, Jamie, and their four children. When he is not writing or teaching, he enjoys spending time with his family, watching Manchester United, and savoring good coffee—to the glory of God.





*His  
mercies  
are new every  
morning*

*Lamentations 3:23*

# Say What!?

Even though the song *His Mercy is More* was written in 2016, this hymn still uses words that may be difficult to understand because it explores big ideas about God.

To sing this song with understanding – and worship with all your heart – it helps to know what all the words mean. These are definitions for some words that may help you understand this song and God's mercy.

**Forgiveness:** *choosing not to hold someone's wrong against them, and giving up your right to stay angry at them*

**Grace:** *unmerited favor — kindness given without obligation or repayment*

**Lavished:** *given or produced in abundance*

**Mercy:** *not giving the punishment that someone deserves*

**'Neath:** *beneath — a poetic contraction of "beneath"*

**Omniscient:** *having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight*

**Patience:** *the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset*

**Sum:** *the whole amount; made by adding numbers or amounts together*

**Vilest:** *extremely unpleasant or morally bad; lowest in moral standards*

**Wrongs:** *acts or events causing injury or injustice*

# *His Mercy Is More*

H N E T M S O E V O S L M U M  
L Y M U E R O M H S T A M E A  
I R R S E S S S I N R O M E K  
S R H S M N N L L N O G S N Y  
I E E R W I Y A O M N U I V L  
M S E S E S W N R D G T R H E  
N E S M T N D D D E E T E I H  
R I Y R E V E S A P R A I S E  
R V M W L R N W E A Y E S R E  
N I E E R A C E O C E D O H A  
H T S T H E I Y R U Y M I N R  
A Y H T Y Y E S R N S S O I R  
R S D E W N S S E N K R A D S  
R H R E Y A R H E O E T S N S  
S O E T I M A S O S R P R H E

praise  
mercy  
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morn  
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the  
is  
darkness  
our  
many

Lord  
more  
new  
sins

His  
stronger  
every  
they

# Painting a Sunrise

Lamentations 3:22-23 (CSB) says this;

*"Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!"*

Just like God's mercy towards us, there is a new and unique sunrise each day. As you learn to paint a sunrise, meditate\* on this verse and the implications of new daily mercies.

*\*meditate – to focus deeply on a passage or idea to gain deeper understanding.*

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## Materials:

- Watercolors
  - At least the primary colors - Red, blue, and yellow.
- A round paintbrush
- Watercolor paper (multi-media paper works as well)
- Painter's Tape (to hold your paper down)
- Paper towel or rag to clean brush



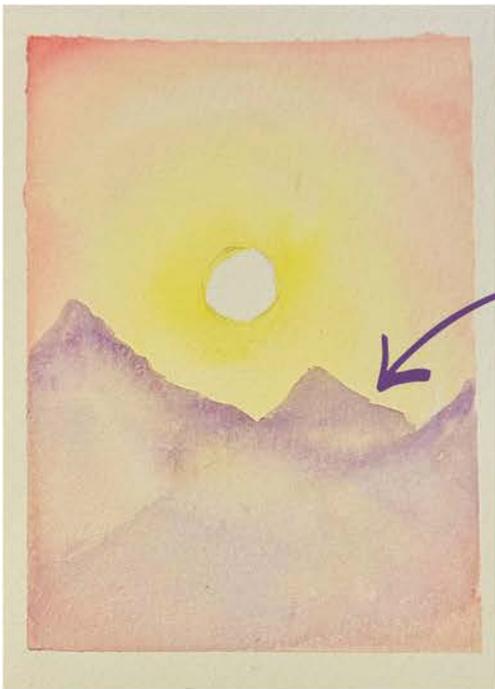
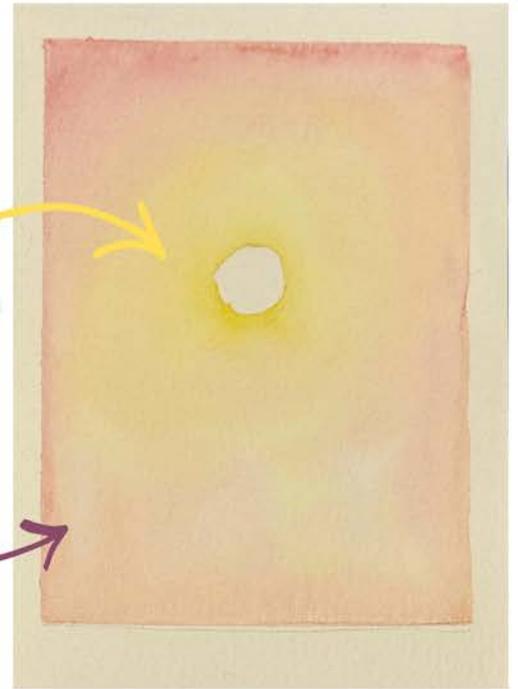
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## Step One - Preparing your surface

1. Tape your watercolor paper to a hard surface such as a clipboard or the back of a sketchbook. *(This prevents your paper from curling up when you place water on it.)*
2. Come up with a plan for what you want your sunrise to look like.
3. Lightly sketch out your plan on your paper.

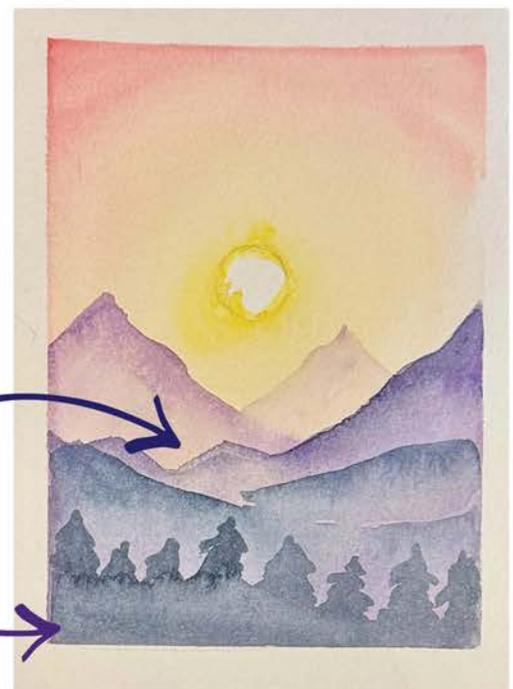
## Step Two - Painting your Background

1. Take your paintbrush and cover the sky area with water being careful to avoid the sun.
2. Load your brush with yellow and paint in circle motions around the sun.
  - a. This is called painting "Wet-into-wet"! notice how the color spreads through the water that you placed earlier.
3. Load your brush with a red or purple color and paint the areas furthest away from the sun.



## Step Three - Adding Mountains

1. Using a darker purple, paint the mountains that would be furthest away from you.
  - a. These mountains will be the lightest, so make sure to use lots of water to dilute the paint.

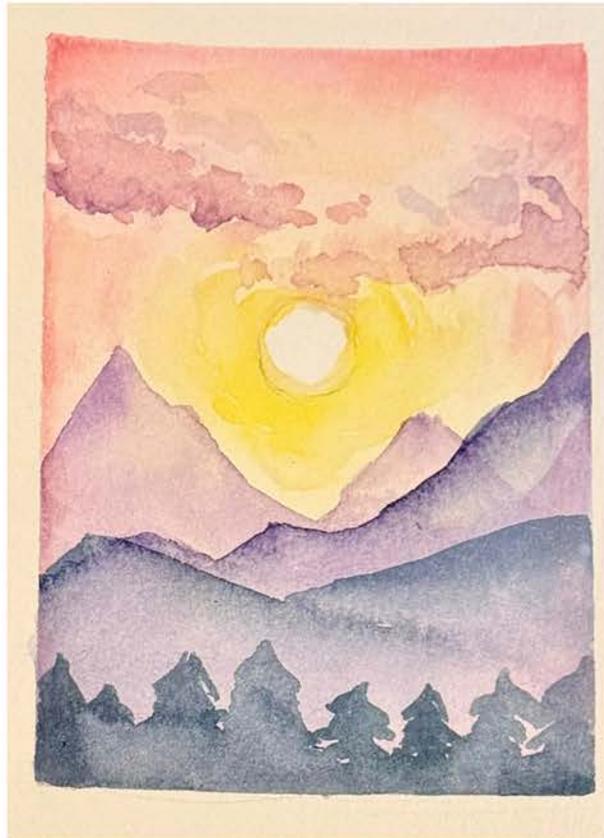


## Step Four - More Mountains

1. Continue adding mountains, using darker and darker purple and blue colors as you approach the foreground.
2. Finally, add a tree line on the closest mountain.

## Step Five - Finishing Touches

1. Using a pink/purple color, dab your paintbrush in the sky to create clouds.
  - a. If they are too dark, use a paper towel or a rag to pull up some of the color
2. Admire your finished work!



### Additional Questions for Meditation:

- How does the phrase “faithful love” (CSB) shape our understanding of God differently than simply “love” or “kindness”?
- What does “we do not perish” suggest about the severity of the situation the speaker is in? What kind of hope is being expressed here?
- Why do you think the author connects survival (not perishing) directly to God’s character rather than to human strength or repentance?
- How might “new every morning” be understood by someone whose circumstances look the same—or worse—each day?
- How might these verses invite a daily practice of remembering God’s faithfulness rather than waiting for dramatic deliverance?

# Mercy, Math, and Meaning

## Key Math Words:

- **Count** – To find how many
- **Sum** – The answer to an addition problem
- **Debt** – Something owed
- **Afford** – To be able to pay or give
- **Many** – A large number
- **More** – A greater amount
- **Payment** – What is given to settle a debt
- **Infinity** – Unbounded space, time, or quantity
- **Limit** - The point, edge, or line beyond which something ends, may not go, or is not allowed.
- **Balance** - A state of equilibrium or parity characterized by cancellation of all forces by equal opposing forces.
- **Zero** – A cardinal number indicating the absence of any or all units under consideration or an ordinal number indicating an initial point or origin.

God is the Creator of all subjects and math is one of those subjects that we either love or hate. The song, *His Mercy is More* is full of math words which leads to the question. Can we even begin understand that attribute of God apart from math? In math, we often **count** mistakes, find their **sum**, and keep track of what is **owed**. If we make errors, we may feel like we are in **debt**, unable to **afford** the **cost** of fixing everything. Sometimes our mistakes feel **many**, and the consequences seem **more** than we can handle. We wonder what **payment** could ever be enough.

In the song, we learn that God does not keep a harsh record of our wrongs. He does not focus on the sum of our failures. Instead, His mercy is greater than our mistakes. Just as math teaches us to measure and calculate, mercy teaches us that love cannot always be counted. God's grace pays a debt we could never afford, showing us that forgiveness is stronger than judgment.

Just for fun try to unravel some of these math puzzles!

# Math Story Problems

These problems come from some of the stories that you will read throughout this resource!

Keep your eyes open for them!

## Count & Sum

- Mom and I hung 3 strips of wallpaper in the morning and 5 strips in the afternoon. Can you count how many strips we hung in total? What is the sum of the strips hung?
- Milo used 4 jars of honey for the first cake and 5 jars for the second cake. Can you count the total jars of honey used? What is the sum?
- A student makes 18 mistakes on Monday and 27 mistakes on Tuesday. Instead of counting them, the teacher forgives them all. If the teacher had counted them, how many mistakes would there be in total?
- Esther knew that going to the king without being invited could bring punishment. 10 people had gone to the king without an invitation in the last month, and 8 were punished. If Esther went without an invitation, how many people before her did NOT get punished?

## Debt & Payment

- We owed the wallpaper store money for 10 rolls of wallpaper. We paid for 6 rolls yesterday. How many rolls do we still owe payment for?
- Milo bought 8 jars of honey from a friend but only made a payment for 3 jars so far. How many more jars of honey does he need to pay for?
- A person owes \$8,450 in debt but only has \$2,975. How much more money do they need to pay off the debt?

## Afford & Many

- If each roll of wallpaper costs \$15, how many rolls can we afford to buy with \$90?
- If each jar of honey costs \$7, and Milo has \$28, how many jars of honey can he afford to buy?

## More & Count

- There were 7 strips of wallpaper on the east wall and 4 strips on the west wall. Which wall has more strips, and how many more?
- The second cake had 12 wildflowers, and the first cake had 9 wildflowers. Which cake had more, and how many more wildflowers did it have?
- If someone entered the throne room uninvited, the chance was high they would be punished. Out of 5 uninvited people, 5 deserved punishment. But the king showed mercy to Esther and didn't punish her. How many more people were punished than shown mercy?

## Infinity & Limits

- A bucket of 1,000 stones is thrown into a bottomless sea. Each day, 125 stones are added. After 12 days: How many stones are in the sea?

## Growth Over Time & Comparison

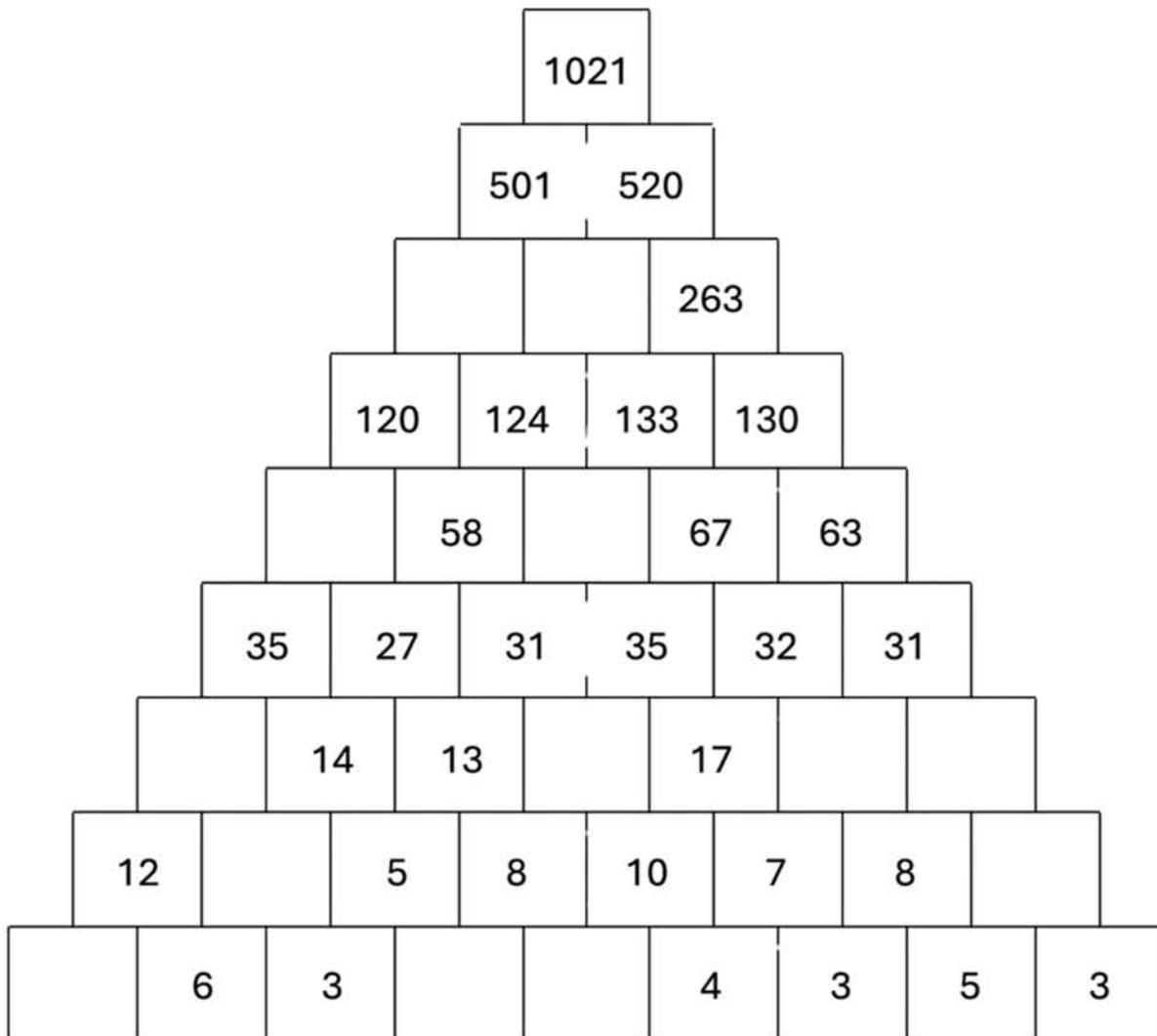
- A candle gets brighter every morning. On Day 1, it has brightness level 15. Each day it increases by 6 units. What is its brightness on Day 10?
- A group has 245 mistakes. They receive 380 acts of mercy. How many more acts of mercy than mistakes.
- Esther invited the king and Haman to a feast. She prepared 2 feasts for them. If at the first feast she served 6 dishes, and at the second feast she served 4 more dishes, how many dishes did she prepare in total?



# NUMBER PYRAMID PUZZLE

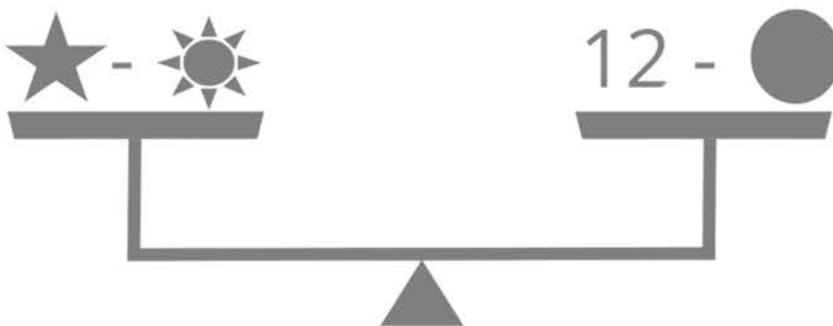
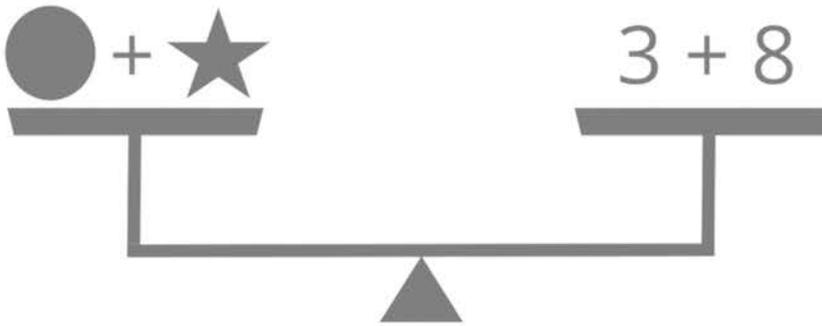
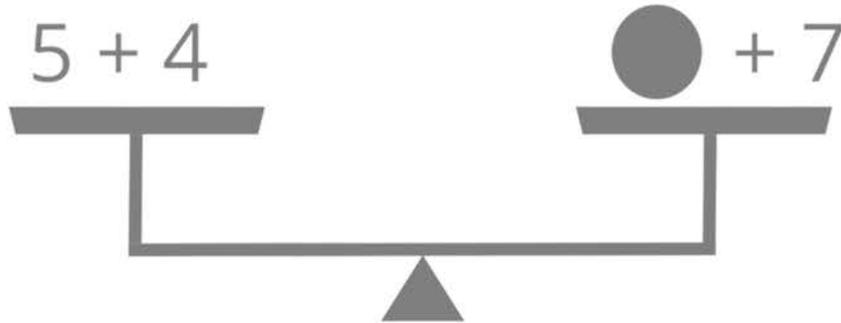
## LEVEL 1

The number in each cell of the pyramid is the sum of the two numbers directly below it. Fill in the missing numbers to complete the number pyramid puzzle.



## Balance The Sides

Balance out both sides of the balancing pan and find the value of shapes or objects given.



$$\bullet + \odot + \star =$$

# *When God Rewrites the Numbers*

Using Math Problems to Teach the Gospel Truths of Mercy

## 1. Counting vs. Canceling

- If someone makes 12 mistakes one week and 15 the next, what is the sum?
- If instead of keeping track, you forgive both weeks, what is the “total” you remember?
- Why do you think mercy chooses not to keep adding up wrongs?

**Connection:** God does not keep a running total of our failures.

---

## 2. Debt That Can't Be Paid

- A person owes \$10,000 but can only afford \$1,200. How much is still unpaid?
- If someone else pays the rest for them, what happens to the debt?
- How is this like Jesus paying a spiritual debt for us?

**Connection:** “Jesus paid for our mistakes with His life.”

---

## 3. Many vs. More

- If mistakes = 340 and Mercy = 500, which is greater?
- How much greater is mercy?
- Why is it important that mercy is always “more” and not just “equal”?

**Connection:** God's forgiveness is greater than our failures.

---

## 4. Resetting the Score

- A score board shows 25 mistakes. If God “erases” the board, what is the new total?
- Why is a reset better than carrying old numbers forward?

**Connection:** God's mercy is new everyday!

---

## 5. Infinite Mercy

- If mercy were like a bottomless sea, how many mistakes could it hold?
- Can you ever reach the end of infinity?
- What does that tell us about God's forgiveness?

**Connection:** “Without bottom or shore.”

## 6. Cost and Payment

- If something costs \$5,000 and someone else pays it for you, how much do you owe?
- Why is that gift so valuable?
- How does Jesus' sacrifice work the same way?

**Connection:** "His blood was the payment."

---

## 7. Multiplying Mercy

- If one act of forgiveness inspires 3 more people to forgive, and each of them forgives 3 others, how many acts of mercy are there after 2 rounds?
- How can mercy "grow" when we share it?

**Connection:** Mercy spreads.

---

## 8. Keeping Records vs. Releasing Them

- If you write down every mistake someone makes for a year, what happens to your list?
- How does that affect your relationship?
- What happens when you erase the list?

**Connection:** Love chooses mercy over records.

---

## 9. Daily Renewal

- If you receive forgiveness every day for 30 days, how many new chances do you get?
- Why do we need mercy again and again?
- How does this show God's patience?

**Connection:** "New every morn"

---

## 10. Heart Math

- If anger increases by 5 units each time you hold a grudge, what happens over time?
- If peace increases by 5 units each time you forgive, what happens instead?
- Which "equation" leads to a better life?

**Connection:** Mercy brings freedom.

# Balance & Mercy

## A Song Spotlight STEM Lesson

### Materials:

- Fat marker or highlighter
- Ruler
- Variety of coins
- If needed: a small medicine cup or dixie cup
- A flat and level surface, like a table, or the floor



### Instructions:

1. Place the marker on the table in front of you with the cap facing towards you.
2. Place the ruler on top of the marker so you can easily read the centimeter markings.
3. Adjust the ruler left or right until the ruler can balance itself on a marker. If the marker is rolling too much, place something small, like an eraser, on either side to hold it in place.
4. Once the ruler is “mostly” balancing. Look at the ruler.

**What centimeter marking is most closely centered above the marker? \_\_\_\_\_**

5. Place a coin on top of the end of the ruler closest to the 1 cm marking. Now balance the ruler again.

**Now what centimeter marking is most closely centered above the marker? \_\_\_\_\_**

6. Balance the ruler again, but this time with 3 coins on one side.

**What centimeter marking is most closely centered above the marker? \_\_\_\_\_**

7. What is happening to the centimeter reading as you add more coins? Is the number getting: (circle one)

bigger                      or                      smaller

Is it getting closer to the 30cm marking or farther from it? (circle one)

closer                      or                      farther

8. Now add coins or small objects until you can't balance the scale anymore– you may even have to use a medicine cup or other dish to hold it all!!

How many coins did it take before the centimeter marking was too close to the zero end of the ruler that you couldn't add any more?

9. Now, without taking any coins off or adding any weight (of any kind – including using your hand) to the other side – is there a way to balance the ruler?

Try to blow on the other end of the ruler. Does any of your effort make the ruler go back to balanced? Why not?

10. How might the coins in this scenario represent our sins? Is there anything we can do to balance out our sins on our own, to make them right in the eyes of God the Father?

**“Our sins, they are many.”** Like the coins in the demo, our sin separates us from God – it moves us farther and farther away from him. It sets us off balance from how things should be.

**“His mercy is more.”**

11. What is “mercy”?

12. Draw a picture below of what would happen if you dropped a bowling ball onto the opposite end of the ruler from the coin.

13. How does the bowling ball in your picture above represent God’s mercy?

**“What riches of kindness He lavished on us”**

14. Count up all the coins you placed on the ruler. How much money is there? \_\_\_\_\_

15. **Challenge question:** How much money would you have to put on the other end so that the centimeter marking above the marker would read as close to 30 as possible?



16. Draw a picture of what that scale would look like:

**“His blood was the payment, His life was the cost.”**

17. What was the incredible kindness that the Lord did for us that has caused our “balance to tip the opposite direction?”



18. In the picture you drew above, is the scale balanced? (is it straight/parallel with the table?)

yes                      or                      no

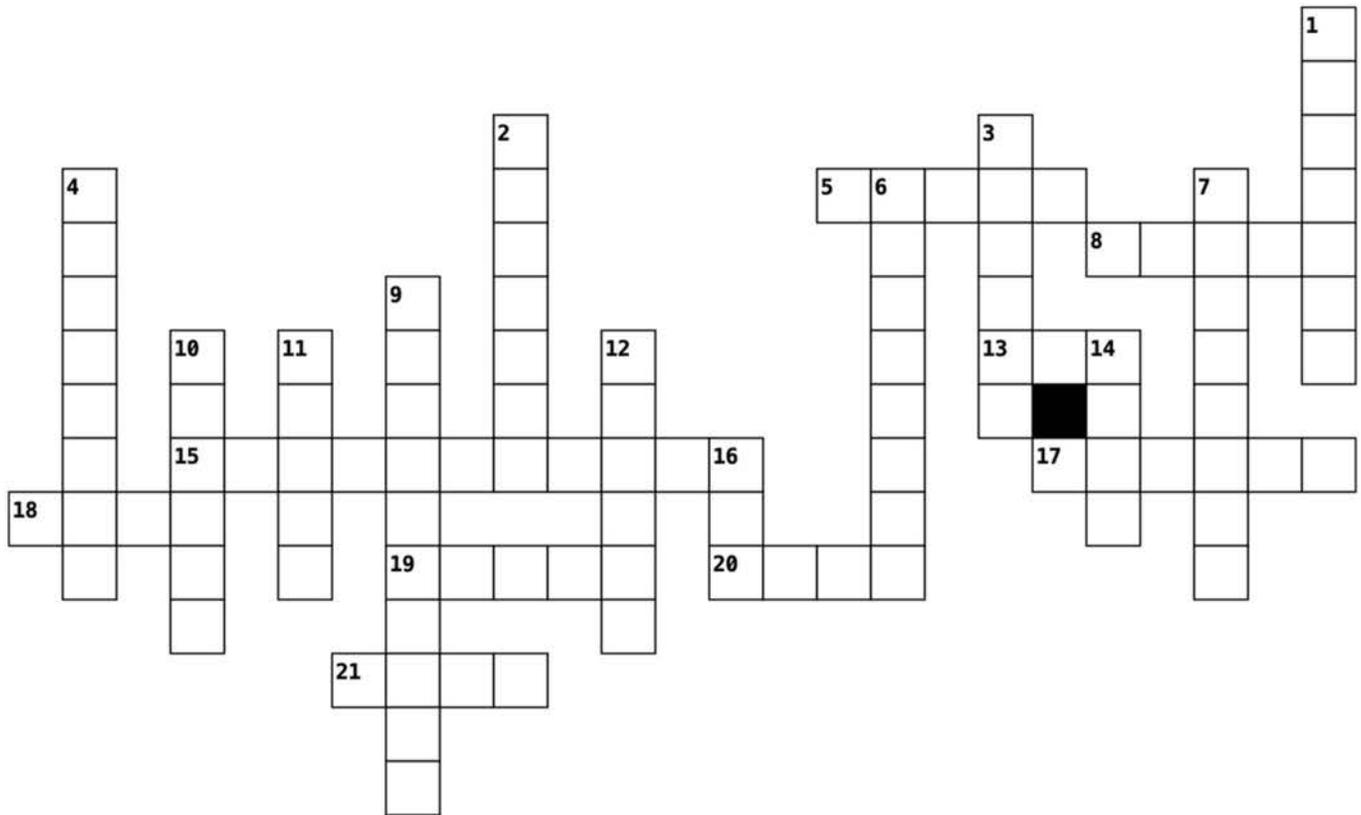
What does that say about the kindness and mercy of God?  
(Use the words of the song to fill in the blanks to answer this question.)

“\_\_\_\_\_ than darkness, new every morn.”

“Thrown into a sea \_\_\_\_\_ or shore.”

“Our sins, they are many. His mercy is \_\_\_\_\_.”

# His Mercy Is More



## Across

- 5. The point, edge, or line beyond which something ends, may not go, or is not allowed.
- 8. Unmerited favor — kindness given without obligation or repayment
- 13. The whole amount made by adding numbers or amounts together
- 15. Choosing not to hold someone's wrong against them, and giving up your right to stay angry at them
- 17. Acts or events causing injury or injustice
- 18. A cardinal number indicating the absence of any or all units under consideration or an ordinal number indicating an initial point or origin.
- 19. To find how many
- 20. A large number
- 21. Something owed

## Down

- 1. What is given to settle a debt
- 2. A state of equilibrium or parity characterized by cancellation of all forces by equal opposing forces.
- 3. Extremely unpleasant or morally bad; lowest in moral standards
- 4. Given or produced in abundance
- 6. Unbounded space, time, or quantity
- 7. The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset
- 9. Having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight
- 10. To be able to pay or give
- 11. Not giving the punishment that someone deserves
- 12. A poetic contraction of "beneath"
- 14. A greater amount
- 16. The answer to an addition problem

# The Golden Scepter

Queen Esther stood outside the king's throne room. Her heart was beating fast. She knew the law.

If anyone went to the king without being invited, they could be punished — even killed. That rule applied to everyone... even the queen.

Esther took a deep breath.

She loved her people, and they were in danger. If she didn't speak up, they might all be hurt. Esther prayed, trusted God, and stepped forward.

The room went quiet.

Everyone watched.

Would the king be angry?

Then something amazing happened.

The king looked at Esther... and held out his golden scepter.

That meant she was welcome.

*"The king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand."  
— Esther 5:2 (NASB 1995)*

Esther deserved punishment by law.

But instead, she received life.

That is called **mercy**.

Mercy means *not getting* the punishment you deserve.

Then the king smiled and spoke kindly. He said,

*"What is troubling you, Queen Esther?... even to half of the kingdom it will be given to you."  
— Esther 5:3 (NASB 1995)*

Esther wasn't just forgiven.

She was welcomed.

She was honored.

She was invited to ask for help.

That is called **grace**.

Grace means *getting good things you don't deserve*.

Because Esther received mercy and grace, she was able to help save her people.

And here's something even better:

Jesus does the same for us.

When we come to God, we don't get pushed away.

Jesus opens His arms.

We deserve punishment for sin, but Jesus gives us forgiveness.

That's mercy.

We don't earn God's love, but He gives it freely.

That's grace.

He provides for all our needs.

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

— Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB 1995)

## What do you think?

- Have you ever been afraid to tell the truth?
- Has someone ever forgiven you when you messed up?
- How is God able to invite us before His throne and show us mercy and grace?
- How can you show mercy or grace to someone this week?

### Prayer

*Dear God, thank You for loving us.  
Thank You for mercy that is greater than our sins.  
Thank You for grace when we don't deserve it.  
Help us forgive others and show kindness like Jesus.  
Amen.*

# Mercy and Grace



**“The king extended to Esther the golden scepter  
which was in his hand.”**

**Esther 5:2**

# Memorize the Song

Can you remember the words?

Fill in the blanks to complete the verses and chorus of the song!

## Verse 1:

What \_\_\_\_\_ could remember no \_\_\_\_\_ we have \_\_\_\_\_

Omniscient \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ He \_\_\_\_\_ not their \_\_\_\_\_

Thrown into a \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Our \_\_\_\_\_ they are many His \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_

## Chorus:

\_\_\_\_\_ the Lord His mercy is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ than darkness new every \_\_\_\_\_

Our sins they are \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_ is more

## Verse 2:

What \_\_\_\_\_ would wait as we \_\_\_\_\_ roam

What \_\_\_\_\_ so \_\_\_\_\_ is calling us \_\_\_\_\_

He \_\_\_\_\_ the weakest the \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_

Our \_\_\_\_\_ they are \_\_\_\_\_ His mercy is \_\_\_\_\_

## Verse 3:

What \_\_\_\_\_ of kindness He \_\_\_\_\_ on us

His \_\_\_\_\_ was the payment His \_\_\_\_\_ was the cost

We stood 'neath a \_\_\_\_\_ we could never \_\_\_\_\_

Our sins they are many His \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_

# Mercy Mad Lib!

In a sunny \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_  
(place) (name 1) (animal)  
had baked the biggest most \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
(adjective) (cooked food)  
anyone had ever seen. It was \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(color) (adjective)  
and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ had worked all morning  
(adjective) (name 1)  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and decorating it  
("ing" verb) ("ing" verb)  
with tiny \_\_\_\_\_.  
(plural noun)

Just as \_\_\_\_\_ stepped away to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
(name 1) (verb) (name 2)  
the \_\_\_\_\_ bounced into the clearing. \_\_\_\_\_ was  
(animal) (name 2)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and playful, always exploring, and they sniffed the \_\_\_\_\_  
(adjective) (cooked food)  
with wide eyes.

Before \_\_\_\_\_ could say anything, \_\_\_\_\_ tripped over a  
(name 1) (name 2)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and landed in the middle of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(noun) (cooked food)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ flew everywhere, and the  
(plural noun) (plural noun)  
\_\_\_\_\_ tumbled off the top. \_\_\_\_\_'s mouth fell  
(plural noun) (name 1)  
open. Their beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ was ruined!  
(cooked food)  
\_\_\_\_\_ scrambled up, cheeks \_\_\_\_\_. "I'm so sorry! I  
(name 2) (adjective)  
didn't mean to!"

\_\_\_\_\_ could have \_\_\_\_\_, or sent  
(name 1) (verb)

\_\_\_\_\_ away. They could have thrown the  
(name 2) (verb)

\_\_\_\_\_ away in frustration. But instead, they \_\_\_\_\_  
(cooked food) (adverb)

took a deep breath and said, "It's okay \_\_\_\_\_. I can make another one."  
(name 2)

Together, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ gathered the ingredients  
(name 1) (name 2)

again. They \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
(verb) (verb) (verb)

and soon the \_\_\_\_\_ released a \_\_\_\_\_,  
(noun) (adjective) (color)

smell across the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(place)

When the new \_\_\_\_\_ was ready, \_\_\_\_\_ cut it into slices  
(cooked food) (name 1)

and shared it with all the animals in the \_\_\_\_\_. Everyone  
(place)

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and celebrated together.  
(verb) (verb)

From that day on, the animals remembered: accidents happen, but showing mercy  
– choosing kindness instead of anger – can lead to something even

\_\_\_\_\_ than before.  
(adjective)

# Kid Scenarios:

## Understanding God's Justice, Mercy, Grace & Forgiveness

### Scenario 1 - The Broken Tablet

Eli was playing a game on Mom's tablet even though he was told to wait. He dropped it, and the screen cracked. Eli felt scared and ashamed.

Mom could take away screen time for a month (justice).

But instead, she talks with Eli about obeying and being careful, gives him a hug, and shortens the punishment (mercy).

Later, she helps him earn money to help fix it and reminds him she loves him no matter what (grace).

#### Talk About It:

- What would justice look like here?
- How did Mom show mercy?
- What part was grace?
- How does this help us understand how God treats us?



#### Scripture:

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us... made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."*

— Ephesians 2:4-5 (NASB 1995)

### Scenario 2 - The Cookie Mystery

There are supposed to be cookies for dessert, but someone ate two before dinner.

Dad asks who did it.

Noah admits it was him.

Dad explains why that was wrong (justice). Noah loses dessert.

But Dad also gives Noah a hug and says, "I'm glad you told the truth" (mercy).

Later, Dad surprises Noah with a cookie the next day even though he didn't earn it (grace).

#### Talk About It:

- Why is telling the truth an important part of receiving mercy?
- What was justice?
- What was mercy?
- What was grace?



#### Scripture:

*"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."*

— Proverbs 28:13

# Kid Scenarios: (part 2)

## Scenario 3 - The Blame Game

Two brothers break a lamp while playing basketball inside. Both blame each other.

Mom says they both share responsibility (justice).

They both help clean up.

Mom forgives them and helps them learn better rules for inside play (mercy).

Later that week, she takes them for ice cream just because she loves them (grace).

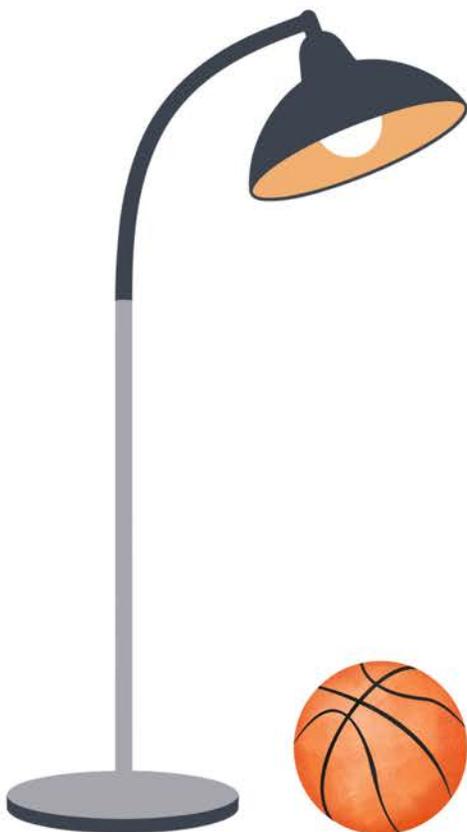
### Talk About It:

- Why did both boys need to take responsibility?
- How did Mom show mercy?
- What made the ice cream grace?

### Scripture:

*"Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other...  
just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."*

— Colossians 3:13



# *New Every Morning:* **Living in God's Chesed**

*"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" — Lamentations 3:22–24*

Mornings are amazing times. Everything feels fresh and full of possibility. We put on clean clothes, prepare new meals, check in with how our bodies feel, and open our eyes to a brand-new day. (Good Morning Baltimore!) Every morning reminds us that God is not finished with us yet.

But even more incredible than a fresh start is this truth: God's mercy and compassion are new every single morning. They are new despite our sin. They are new despite our rebellion. They are new despite our indifference. They are new despite our failures. We do not earn them. We do not deserve them. Yet God gives them freely, faithfully, and consistently.

## **The Power of Chesed**

The word translated as "mercy" in Lamentations 3:22-23 comes from the Hebrew word **chesed**. If you have spent time studying Scripture, you may have encountered this word before. It appears more than 250 times in the Old Testament and carries such deep meaning that it is difficult to translate with just one English word.

Depending on the context, it is translated as:

- Unfailing love
- Lovingkindness
- Mercy
- Grace
- Loyalty
- Faithfulness
- Devotion
- Steadfast love
- Tenderness

Even in the Greek Septuagint, this word is translated in eleven different ways. That alone shows how rich and powerful it is.

Chesed describes God's covenant love—His faithful, committed, never-giving-up love for His people. It is love that stays when others leave. It is mercy that remains when justice alone would condemn. It is grace that continues when patience seems exhausted. God's chesed means:

- He never forgets us.
- He never abandons us.
- He never changes.
- He never stops loving us.
- He never breaks His promises.

He is holy—set apart—in this attribute. No one loves like He does.

## Chesed in Action

Scripture gives us beautiful pictures of chesed in human relationships. One of the clearest is found in the story of Naomi and Ruth. Ruth's loyal love toward Naomi—her refusal to abandon her, her willingness to sacrifice her own desires, her commitment to walk with her—reflects God's own heart.

We also see chesed repeated again and again in Psalm 136: *"His love endures forever."*

Every verse echoes this truth. God's love does not expire. It does not weaken. It does not fade. And in Micah 6:8, chesed becomes something God calls us to live out:

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy (chesed), and to walk humbly with your God?"*

## Our Fickleness vs. God's Faithfulness

When we place Micah 6:8 beside Lamentations 3, we are forced to pause and reflect. Human love is often inconsistent.

We fall in and out of love. We are merciful one day and harsh the next. We are generous today and selfish tomorrow. We forgive easily sometimes and hold grudges at other times. Our relationships fluctuate. Our emotions change. Our commitments waver.

But God is not like us. He is steady when we are unstable. He is faithful when we are forgetful. He is patient when we are impulsive. He is merciful when we are judgmental. In spite of our sins, our rebellion, and our disinterest—He is *chesed*.

And every morning, He reminds us:

*"You are still loved. You are still forgiven. You are still Mine. You still have hope."*

## A Call to Live Out Chesed

Because we have received such great mercy, we are called to extend it to others. God does not pour His love into us so that it can stop with us. He pours it into us so that it can flow through us.

When we show patience...

When we forgive...

When we serve...

When we stay loyal...

When we choose mercy over resentment...

When we love when it is difficult...

We are reflecting His chesed.

May we praise God for His unfailing mercy, and may we learn, day by day, to show that same mercy to the people around us.

# *A Pound of Flesh and an Overflowing Cup:* **Shakespeare, Philosophy, and Theology**

*"The quality of mercy is not strained; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes: 'tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown: his sceptre shows the force of temporal power, the attribute to awe and majesty, wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings; but mercy is above this sceptred sway; it is enthroned in the hearts of kings, it is an attribute to God himself; and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice. "*

*—The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene I*

One of the most famous reflections on mercy—what it is and to whom it should be shown—appears in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In this scene, mercy is not presented as weakness or sentimentality, but as something noble, powerful, and deeply moral.

The dramatic tension of the play centers on the conflict between justice and mercy. Shylock, the lender, demands justice from Antonio, the borrower who has defaulted on his loan. The agreement between the two men is explicit: if the debt cannot be repaid, Shylock is entitled to a pound of Antonio's flesh. Shylock insists that justice must be satisfied according to the letter of the law.

At first glance, this insistence may seem "right" or "fair." Should people not be held to their promises? Should agreements not be honored? These instincts point us toward an important truth: without justice, mercy has no meaning. Mercy presupposes that something is owed. If nothing is due, then mercy is unnecessary.

To explore this idea of justice more carefully, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy cites a classic definition from Roman law:

*"Justice is the constant and perpetual will to render to each his due."*

*--Institutes of Justinian, sixth century AD*

This definition highlights four important features of justice.

First, justice occurs in community; one cannot administer justice to oneself.

Second, justice requires authority—the ability to enforce or alter outcomes.

Third, justice concerns what is owed, something due and not freely negotiable.

Finally, justice is described as "constant and perpetual," meaning it cannot be subject to whim, emotion, or favoritism.

How does this philosophical understanding of justice align with Scripture?

In Jeremiah 17:9–10 (NLT), God declares:

*"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things... But I, the Lord, search all heart and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve."*

Here, God establishes Himself as the ultimate administrator of justice—perfectly meeting every criterion outlined above.

I. God acts in community with His people.

From Israel in the Old Testament to the Church in the New Testament, God is present with those He governs.

“For the Lord will not forsake his people.” – *Psalms 94:14*

“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – *Matthew 28:20*

II. God possesses absolute authority.

As Creator, He has the right to direct and judge all things.

“For in him all things were created... all things have been created through him and for him.” – *Colossians 1:16*

III. God clearly defines expectations and consequences.

Justice requires clarity, and Scripture leaves no ambiguity regarding obedience and its outcomes.

“For the wages of sin is death.” – *Romans 6:23*

IV. God is unchanging and faithful to His nature.

“God is not human, that he should lie... Does he promise and not fulfill?” – *Numbers 23:19*

All of this establishes that God not only has the right to administer justice, but that He is obligated by His own nature to do so. This brings us back to *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock insists on the strict application of the law:

“The pound of flesh which I demand of him is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it... I stand for judgment.”

His argument mirrors the demands of perfect justice. Scripture echoes this same sobering reality:

“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” – *James 2:10*

Like the characters in Shakespeare’s play, we are unsettled by such unbending justice. It feels harsh. It feels impossible. And deep within us, we long for mercy.

It is at this moment—when justice has spoken fully and the weight of the law presses down—that we must recognize a profound truth. A true administrator of justice understands something deeply human and profoundly difficult: that the rigid application of the law, when severed from compassion, can crush the very person it was meant to protect. The letter of the law, when followed without wisdom or love, can become unbearable—especially when weighed against the good of the individual standing before the judge.

So the question presses in on us with urgency: How does God reconcile His perfect justice with another defining attribute of His character—His love?

The answer is found in one of the most beautiful, powerful, and indescribable words we know: mercy.

As uncompromising as God's standard of righteousness is, His mercy is even more astonishing. His justice is exact. His holiness is absolute. His consequences are real. And yet—His mercy is abundant beyond measure. It is an unending, overflowing cup of forgiveness that does not give us what we deserve, but instead removes our guilt and lifts the burden of our sin—our falling short of righteousness.

This is not justice abandoned. This is justice fulfilled and wrapped in love. Mercy does not weaken justice; it completes it. Here, justice and love are not at odds—they are bound together, perfectly and eternally, in the heart of God.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia—disguised as a young law scholar—gives voice to this very truth:

*“And earthly power doth then show likest God’s  
When mercy seasons justice.”*

True authority is revealed not in relentless punishment, but in compassionate restraint. Justice without mercy becomes cruelty; mercy without justice becomes chaos.

This tension finds its ultimate resolution in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God does not ignore justice, nor does He relax His holy standard. Instead, God's justice is fully satisfied through Christ. At the cross, the penalty demanded by the law is paid—not dismissed, not postponed, not overlooked—but fulfilled.

*“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement... to demonstrate His righteousness, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” - Romans 3:25–26*

This is the climax of mercy. Justice is satisfied, and mercy is poured out. We receive not what we are due, but what Christ has secured on our behalf. Our guilt is removed. Our sin is forgiven. Righteousness is credited to us—not because justice failed, but because justice was completed in love.

What gives God the right to extend such mercy? The same truths that give Him the right to administer justice: He is the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Sovereign Judge, and the One who remains forever faithful to His own nature.

What an incredible, amazing, wonderful gift.  
Our sins are many—but His mercy is more.

Amen and Amen.

# Discussion Questions:

## Literary & Conceptual Questions

- In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock insists on the strict letter of the law. Why do you think Shakespeare presents his argument as logically valid but morally troubling?
- Portia says that mercy “is twice blest.” In what ways does mercy bless both the giver and the receiver? Can you see this dynamic at work in the play?
- Is justice ever truly neutral, or is it always shaped by the heart of the one who administers it? How does this idea play out in the courtroom scene?
- Do you think Shylock’s demand would feel different to us if we were not emotionally aligned with Antonio? What does that reveal about how we judge justice?

## Justice, Mercy, and God’s Character

- The essay argues that mercy is not the opposite of justice, but its fulfillment. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Why is justice necessary for mercy to have meaning? What happens to mercy when justice is ignored or denied?
- Scripture describes God as both perfectly just and perfectly loving. Why do we often struggle to hold those two truths together?
- How does James 2:10 (“guilty of breaking all of it”) deepen our understanding of the impossibility of self-justification before God?

## Christ and the Cross

- The essay claims that the Cross is where God’s justice is fully satisfied and His mercy fully revealed. Why is this distinction important, rather than saying God simply “forgives”?
- How does understanding Christ as satisfying justice—not bypassing it—change the way we view sin, forgiveness, and grace?
- In what sense is the Cross both the most just and the most merciful act in history?

## Personal & Practical Application

- Where do you most naturally fall—toward strict justice or toward easy mercy? What might that reveal about your own heart?
- Can you think of a situation in your life where applying the “letter of the law” would be easier than extending mercy? What would mercy look like there?
- How does recognizing your own need for mercy shape the way you administer justice to others?
- What does it mean, practically, for mercy to “season” justice rather than replace it?

## *The Danger of Familiar Mercy*

The student approached his teacher's desk slowly, his stomach tight with dread. He knew exactly what was coming. His project had been due two days ago, and he was only now turning it in. It was the first of three major projects, each worth a third of his final grade. At the beginning of the semester, the professor had made one thing very clear: late work would receive significant deductions. Clutching his folder, the student tried to steady himself.

"I know you'll have to dock points for this," he said quietly. "I ran into some complications and couldn't finish it on time." He had convinced himself those complications were beyond his control as he placed the folder on the desk. The professor looked up and smiled kindly.

"These things happen," he said. "I'm glad you didn't give up and chose to turn it in. And don't worry about losing points—I won't deduct anything." Relief washed over the student's face.

"Thank you so much," he said. "I really appreciate your understanding."

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Several weeks passed, and the second project deadline arrived. Once again, the student found himself running late. Once again, he approached the professor with explanations. And once again, his work was accepted without penalty.

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When the final project deadline came, the student missed it by nearly a week. This time, he offered no excuse. By now, he had received high grades on his first two projects—both late, both forgiven. True to the professor's word, no points had been deducted. Confident, the student assumed everything would turn out fine. So when grades were posted, he was stunned. He had barely passed. His final project had received such a low score that it dragged down his entire average. Confused and discouraged, he went to see his professor.

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"I don't understand," the student said. "Before the final, my grade was near the top of the class. I worked just as hard on this project—maybe harder. How did I do so poorly?"

The professor folded his hands thoughtfully. "Your final project was excellent," he replied. "On its own, it would have earned a very high grade."

The student frowned. "Then why...?"

"Because it was almost a week late," the professor continued. "I had to deduct significant points. At the beginning of the course, I explained that late work would have consequences."

The student's frustration rose. "Yes, you said that," he replied. "But you didn't deduct anything on the other projects. They were late too. That's not fair."

The professor met his eyes. "What would have been fair," he said gently, "is if I had deducted points from the very first one—just as I said I would."

How often do we respond the same way to mercy?

The more we receive, the more we begin to expect.

Over time, we forget what we deserve. We grow accustomed to forgiveness. We stop seeing it as a gift and start treating it as a right.

God's mercy is abundant. It is patient. It is undeserved. But when we forget that, we cheapen it.

We are not meant to live in shame over our shortcomings. Neither are we meant to ignore them. Remembering what we deserve helps us recognize what we've been given. And recognizing that gift leads us to gratitude.

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### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In the story, how did the teacher's repeated mercy shape the student's expectations?
2. Have you ever grown to expect mercy from someone because they showed it to you before?
3. Why do you think humans so easily begin to see mercy as something owed rather than something given?
4. Was the teacher being unfair, or was he restoring fairness? What makes you think so?
5. How do we usually react when mercy is withheld after we've gotten used to receiving it?
6. What does our reaction reveal about our hearts?
7. What happens to our view of God when we forget what we truly deserve?
8. In what area of your life today do you find yourself relying on mercy rather than obedience or discipline?

# Wallpaper

## A true story of mercy.

One bright morning, my mother and I were hanging wallpaper. It was the kind that made a room feel alive: a white background with long, vertical rows of delicate flowers. Hanging it was a careful, precise task. The first strip was the most important—it had to be perfectly straight. If it tilted even slightly, everything that followed would drift crookedly.

We spent what felt like hours on that first piece. We measured, re-measured, smoothed, adjusted, and aligned it again and again. My mother held the paper steady while I brushed out bubbles. The sun moved across the room, casting shifting light on the wall as we worked slowly, holding our breath with each adjustment, knowing that every careful move mattered. A pen lay on the floor beside us, which we were using to mark where the paper would be cut.

My two-year-old daughter, Rachel, was nearby. She wasn't helping so much as exploring—touching the edge of the rug, picking up bits of scrap paper, feeling part of the process in her toddler way.

At some point, Rachel picked up the pen. We didn't notice.

When we finally looked away from the wall to fetch another tool, the pen was gone. We looked around, confused. And then I saw it: Rachel, standing in front of the pristine wallpaper, the pen moving across the surface, leaving dark marks that curved and twisted through the flowers.

I felt a jolt of panic. That first piece—carefully measured, carefully aligned, painstakingly hung over what had felt like hours—was now marked with scribbles. My eyes darted to my mother. I opened my mouth, ready to plead or explain, and said, "I'm really, really sorry."

My mother came over slowly, calm and deliberate. She took the pen from Rachel's hand. Then she turned to me and said softly, **"People are more important than things."**

The room seemed to pause. I realized she could have been upset—she could have scolded Rachel, removed the paper, or started over. She had every reason to. But instead, she leaned close to the wall, and carefully wrote Rachel's name and the date on the piece she had marked.

That piece stayed on the wall. The imperfection, the pen marks, the quiet reminder of Rachel's early curiosity—it has remained for twenty-four years.

That day, I learned that mercy often asks us to pause, to hold back frustration, even when someone has made a mistake that risks undoing hours of careful work. Mercy is choosing compassion and restraint toward someone who has “offended,” valuing the person above the thing we have labored over. It is not easy, and it can feel risky, but it is in those moments—when we could punish or scold, yet choose patience instead—that we show what it truly means to care for another.

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” — Matthew 5:7*

*“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” — Luke 6:36*

*“Mercy triumphs over judgment.” — James 2:13*

## **Understanding the Story**

- Why was the first piece of wallpaper so important? How do you think that made the situation feel more serious?
- How do you think the narrator felt when she saw Rachel drawing on the wallpaper? How do you think Rachel felt?
- Why do you think the mother wrote Rachel’s name and the date on the wallpaper instead of getting angry or taking the paper down?

## **Thinking About Mercy**

- What does mercy mean in this story? Can you think of a time when someone showed mercy to you?
- How did the mother show restraint and compassion, even though she could have been upset?
- Why do you think the story says “people are more important than things”?

## **Applying It to Your Life**

- Can you think of a time when someone made a mistake that affected you? How could you show mercy in that situation?
- Why do you think showing mercy can sometimes be hard? What can help us do it anyway?
- How can choosing mercy instead of punishment make relationships stronger?

## **Bible Connection**

- The story ends with verses about mercy from Matthew, Luke, and James. How do you think these verses connect to the story?
- What do these verses teach us about how God wants us to treat others who make mistakes?

